MID-YEAR MARKS

The Observer reviews student government offices at Notre Dame and Saint Mary’s

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Photo Illustration by Grant Tobin and Steph Wulz
By ANN MARIE JAKUBOWSKI

Since taking office April 1, student body president and vice president Alex Coccia and Nancy Joyce have curated off items left and right.

Recent initiatives included supporting University admissions policies to welcome undocumented students to campus, a week of awareness for mental health issues facing students and a coffee cart installed in Delbarton Hall, all of which were goals included in their campaign platform. Though they have made progress through the concrete to do list, Joyce said they are most proud of their success in engaging students who were not typically involved in student government.

“I’m really proud of the fact that we’ve gotten a lot of involvement from students who are traditionally in a sort of formalized committees,” Joyce said. “I think we’ve done a pretty good job of trying to involve people that we typically aren’t necessarily interested in being involved with student government, and that’s really what we want to do from Day One.”

Coccia said personal, one-on-one interaction with members of the Notre Dame community has been key to his administration’s policy-making.

“Even at the very beginning, we focused on how we approach one-on-one meetings and making sure we’re doing a lot of those with students and administrators, to not only get initiatives going, but also to build important relationships,” he said. “We do that every week with both administrators and students, and that has just come in tremendously handy. It has just been a powerful, powerful method for really working with students to get change going and build trust.”

Setting a standard

Engaging in social media and working to reach students where they are has been a crucial aspect of the administration’s focus. Coccia said Joyce said during their term, they have been trying to “raise the expectations of what student government should be.”

“I think we’ve made a very concerted effort to engage freshmen, which is really important because now, for the next four years, the expectation of that and of every successive class is for a student government that reaches out to them and gives personal invitations to various invitations, a group that is known to them,” she said. “On the other hand, on a macro level of what student government is, we’re really tried to make it something that people can expect a lot from, and that we deliver on.

“Hopefully going forward, that bar has been raised a little bit.” Juan Rangel, chief of staff for this year’s administration, said he has been “pleasantly surprised” by the level of student involvement and cooperation during their time.

“Students are really engaged on campus, not necessarily in a formalized way, but even just in the ways that we can reach them, whether through social networks like Facebook and Twitter or in events that we host,” Rangel said.

Students are more aware that student government is active and that we’re actually trying to meet their needs in any way. I think that’s definitely something to be proud of.”

“Using the momentum”

Coccia said he attributes much of the group’s success in tackling the initiatives on the platform to the constant connection and interaction between members of the executive cabinet and with students outside the organization.

“If someone sends us an idea, we’re typically going to follow up on that and try to get a better sense of what their thoughts are and how they see student government fitting into that,” he said. “I think the sexual assault initiatives are a great example of that. We definitely had that on our platform, but as something that we wanted to work on in whatever capacity we could.”

Joyce said when examining ideas and reviewing priorities, at the end of the day, they “always go back to the student body.”

“But at the same time, I think there’s been a lot that’s come up since we’ve been in office that had been generated by people coming up to us and saying ‘Look, I have this idea’ or ‘I see this happening this way,’ and I think we need that,” she said. “We make that a priority.

The relationships built between administrators and student government have proven “really encouraging,” Coccia said.

“Ultimately, I think administrators are impressed by student ideas, and so when we bring something like the ‘Day in South Bend’ ideas, more often than not, they want to get it done,” he said. “Where student government comes in is in just continuing that conversations.

Rangel said his work often opens their eyes to the inner workings of the University, providing a unique view on the behind-the-scenes action. Coccia said he finds the activity across the strata exciting.

“It’s certainly been encouraging for me to see on all levels of the University the number of moving parts on various initiatives,” he said. “It really does become kind of the expectation of that and of everybody.”

Reviewing the semester

Although the group members are pleased with their work to date, Joyce said they will revisit and review their remaining agenda items to pick up after winter break.

“When we started, we had this huge platform of things we wanted to get done, and we have gotten a lot done, but we certainly think that there are more things for us to accomplish,” she said. “Part of being efficient in the next three months will be picking some of those things and prioritizing some other things.”

“I think that we may not get every single thing checked off of our platform, so we want to make sure that we’re getting as much done as we can and doing the most things that students feel are important.”

Coccia said he hopes the recommendations made in the Oct. 17 report to the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees will help sustain some of the long-term projects beyond the one-year time frame in which they will hold office.

“Hopefully, this and the next board report will lay out blueprint of recommendations for future administrations,” he said. “Ultimately, what we’re trying to do is address the issues and bring the conversation up in a way that is going to prolong it and make sure it is sustained.”

To increase the scope of projects, collaboration with groups outside student government has been a “huge success,” Joyce said.

“We’ve certainly tried to reach out to lots of different people, in the dorms, all the clubs and the administration,” she said. “I think it’s important to realize that student government can work with other people.”

Above and beyond

In addition to representing the student body, Coccia was a 2013 Truman scholar and a finalist for both the Rhodes and the Marshall scholarships. Joyce said his leadership so far has exemplified “setting the tone at the top.”

“Alex would never try to say because he’s too humble, but leadership comes from the top, and his get-it-done attitude and his ability to really go out and figure out what it is that we can be doing is where the inspiration comes from for everybody else,” she said. “I doubt that there are very many people on campus who don’t recognize Alex, and I think that really says a lot.

“We want to say someone as incredible getting out of talking and getting people one-on-one and making people feel like their concerns are our concerns, because they are. I know as a team, that’s a lot of what we’ve done, but it certainly would not be the same without him, so I hope people know that.”

Coccia said the group is “enjoying every day” and is excited to return to campus in January to finish the term strong.

“We’re loving it. We’re having a lot of fun,” he said. “There are certainly frustrating days, and I think we’re all just, I think we’re all just taking those days and turning them sometimes into the time when we can do more than what we want, but it’s been really fun.”

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Grade: A

The Coccia-Joyce administration has earned their top grade of “raising the expectation of what student government should be on campus.” The group has enacted tangible changes, they have developed a unique legacy on Notre Dame’s campus and have a new standard of excellence in the student government office.

Will Joyce and Coccia’s leadership style be recognized? Joyce and their cabinet mates are setting the tone, but will some leaders and connects them to their constituents’ needs.

By AMY PETERSON

Coccia, Joyce engage students in constructive dialogue, implement community-building initiatives

Raising the bar

By AMY PETERSON

Coccia, Joyce engage students in constructive dialogue, implement community-building initiatives
Establishing a presence on campus

Sullivan, Martin foster unity within the SMC community, look to finalize constitution and by-laws

By KAITLYN RABACH
Saint Mary's Senior

Since taking office April 1, Saint Mary's student body president and vice president Kait Sullivan and Maddy Martin have worked with members of Student Government Association (SGA) to promote unity on campus and to increase transparency between student government and the student body.

When the duo chose to run for office last spring, they focused their platform on three main issues: encouraging better communication with SGA board members, making SGA more transparent and emphasizing community participation.

“Whenever we pick a board member, plan an event or make a decision, we think about these goals,” Sullivan said. “This year, we have really been able to create a sense of community within the student government, and we worked hard to pick people in SGA that would go off and running with their ideas. Having people in student government that are passionate about SGA, that are passionate about Saint Mary’s and really want to make a change here on campus, is one way we can focus on these goals.”

Presence on campus

Martin said vocal, passionate members of student government, as well as social media campaigns, have enabled this SGA administration to have one of the most visible presences on campus in recent history.

“I think we have done a really great job of having a presence on campus,” Martin said. “It is not necessarily that we are sponsoring events every day, but rather that we are constantly updating our Facebook page, utilizing OrgSync and posting photos on Instagram. At a small school, we have the ability to be recognizable, and I think we are.”

After attending an American Student Government Association seminar last summer, Martin said she wanted to encourage students to view SGA as more than just a club.

“We were taught to think of ways to set ourselves apart as a full governing body,” Martin said. “As part of our campaign, we engage more with the student body. Martin said she and Sullivan have encouraged the use of the Belle Tower through OrgSync, the website used to facilitate club registration.

Martin said because members of the campus community now understand OrgSync, more people have gone to club events.

“On average, in just one day, at least 800 different people access the Belle Tower,” Martin said. “That is a good portion of our student body, and the numbers have definitely increased since last year. We push our board to utilize OrgSync as much as possible. Anytime like-signs up for the upcoming Chicago trip to registering for the Navy Dance are done on OrgSync.”

Sullivan said she and Martin implemented event evaluation forms for all members of SGA, in order to ensure they attend events sponsored by different groups on campus.

“We created this form for our board asking each of our board members, including ourselves, to fill out three event evaluations per semester,” Sullivan said. “This is a way to keep people accountable, and it is also a good way to get feedback.”

Following the word’s of Sr. Madeleva

Sullivan and Martin said their administration’s motto is the words of Sr. Madeleva Wolff, the College’s third president.

“When you have some part in the making of every other student. This is a fact, a privilege, a responsibility.”

This quote really embodies what Sullivan and Martin are trying to do, Sullivan said. “I think this can be said for our work with Belles Beginnings and for our work with Support a Belle, Love a Belle (SABL).”

To kick off this year, Martin and Sullivan focused on facilitating personal interaction between members of the class of 2017 and the College’s student leaders during first-year orientation. Sullivan said these changes changed to orientation directly resulted from her and Martin’s goal of engaging with the larger campus community.

“This year we played such an active role in Belles Beginnings, and the first years know who we are, and they know we are a resource for them on this campus,” Sullivan said. “That is huge.”

Martin said SGA members had become more prominent, mental illness as an issue on college campuses, Sullivan and Martin decided to address the often-stigmatized topic of mental health this week with a promotion to dialogue about mental health. This week was called “Support a Belle, Love a Belle” and was the third of its kind. Sullivan and Martin said this week, which occurred in October, was one of their most significant accomplishments so far.

“Team up with the tri-campus community and including Notre Dame and Holy Cross on this week was a good decision,” Sullivan said. “I think mental health discussion is very important and is often not talked about as much as it should be across the nation.”

Sullivan said Belle attended the events and works to support their peers.

“The most successful event was ‘Share Your Story,’ where students shared their struggles with mental health,” Sullivan said. “A large portion of the community came to support their peers. … Also, at the prayer service at the Grotto, students from Saint Mary’s walked over. We had about 30 to 40 Saint Mary’s girls there.”

Looking forward

Based on midterm evaluations, Martin said SGA members are pleased with the work of student government overall and look forward to continuing their work next semester.

“Overall, we have had pretty good reviews from our board,” Martin said. “Again, it is important for us to evaluate as a board and as a student body as a whole because we cannot just put ourselves on the back. We need to know if we are being as efficient and effective as possible.”

To capitalize on this efficiency, Sullivan said the group will continue implementing completion and by-laws next semester.

“Every council has by-laws, and we have had our senators look at our own by-laws and, we are editing those,” Sullivan said. “By turnover, our constitution will be revised, which is good because in looking at it now, there are some gray areas, and there shouldn’t be gray areas when you are a governing board.”

Martin said this accords with SGA’s goal of transparency and its desire for all members of the body to have clear, defined positions.

“Our constitution is on our OrgSync page with by-laws for people to reference,” Martin said. “Right now, we are editing the positions so you know exactly who you are getting into. This will also hold people accountable.”

The duo said their plan to keep deeper into mental illness prevention on campus next semester.

“I think a lot of that comes down to really promoting the resource that are already on campus, like BAVO (The Belles Against Violence Office) and more so, giving students an understand- ing of what those resources are, what they do and how you can help,” Sullivan said. “Looking toward the future, Sullivan said she wants her administration to continue to promote unity within student government and amongst the greater student body. She said this would ensure second-year students are eager to make a difference on campus to become more involved.

“I am looking forward to seeing how things will change with the next few years,” Sullivan said. “Hopefully, this administration can help prepare the future leaders of Saint Mary’s College.”

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GRADE: A

The Sullivan-Martin administration has successfully increased the use of OrgSync, resulting in a more informed student body. They have executed some of the key points from their campaign platform, such as increasing community participation and creating more dialogue between student government and the student body. They increased student government’s presence on campus with their changes to Belles Beginnings and their ownership of Support a Belle, Love a Belle. These passionate leaders inspire their board members to create positive change on campus and so far, their board has delivered.

SMC CLASS BOARDS

FIRST-YEAR BOARD:

The Saint Mary’s Freshman Class Board aimed to cultivate a sisterhood within the community, raise funds to benefit underprivileged family for Christmas. Next semester, the board will help organize the annual Drive to co-host Barn Yard Balls in Solloway’s parking lot, help organize the annual Drive to co-host Barn Yard Balls in Solloway’s parking lot.

Sophomore Class Board:

The Sophomore Class Board aims to promote a sisterly atmosphere on the Saint Mary’s campus through events, planning and fundraising. This semester, the board will host the fall homecoming tailgate party as well as a homecoming game watch at the Grand Ave. During the fall semester, the board will host Sophomore Parent’s Weekend and a college fair.

Junior Class Board:

The Junior Class Board provided Saint Mary’s students with a variety of experiences, products and services this semester.

Senior Class Board:

The Saint Mary’s Senior Class Board kicked off the fall semester with Senior Dads Weekend, an annual event that invites seniors’ fathers to campus to spend quality time with their daughters. The weekend began with breakfast at the Williams Inn and a silent auction that benefited the senior class, followed by a trip to see the Evergreen Brick Works and their fall semester auction that benefited the senior class.

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SUB consults students, anticipates spring

By CHRISTIAN MYERS  News Writer

Senior Kaitlyn Keelin, executive director of the Student Union Board (SUB), said the group strongly encouraged consulting students to determine the organization’s offerings this semester.

“We’ve been focusing on getting student input and collecting a lot of data so that we can plan events that students want to see on campus,” Keelin said.

Keelin said SUB also tried to document its internal processes and procedures in order to make the group more consistent year-to-year.

Keelin said SUB’s most-attended event of the semester was Comedy on the Quad, in which comedian Jim Gaffigan drew approximately 4,000 students to his performance on South Quad, Keelin said.

She said other popular SUB events include the presentation by “Brewing Bad” star R.J. Mitte, a Legends stand-up comedy performance by SNAS’s Nasim Pedrad and a Legends concert featuring Eric Hutchinson.

The annual Fall Mall sale organized by SUB also stood out, with more sales this year than ever before, Keelin said.

Keelin said SUB’s biggest challenge was a lack of participation in the Purdue Ticket Lottery. She said SUB purchased the tickets from the Athletic Department at face value last spring, so they lost out when reduced-price tickets became widely available from other sources, such as StubHub, and few students opted for the ticket lottery.

The final SUB event of the semester, Stress Relievers, will take place Sunday from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Notre Dame Room and the ballroom of the LaFortune Student Center, Keelin said. The event will feature free food, energy drinks and massages, she said.

SUB will also use the event to garner student input about the artist they will bring in for the annual spring concert and about which movies SUB will play on its movie nights.

Keelin said the spring semester will feature several large-scale events, including the Collegiate Jazz Festival, the Notre Dame Literary Festival, the Holy Half, The SUB Concert and Artzestial week.

Next semester, SUB will also distribute frequent flier passes that enable students who regularly attend SUB movies to earn free admission, Keelin said.

Keelin said the spring’s kick-off event will be a fireside talk and a networking reception with Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian.

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SUB consults students, anticipates spring

By TORI ROECK  Associate News Editor

Sexual assault response and prevention have been integral components of the Notre Dame and the Saint Mary’s student government administrations this semester.

Notre Dame student body president Alex Coccia said a "sense of urgency" seized both campuses at the beginning of the school year when students received two campuswide emails in one weekend reporting a rape and an attempted rape.

These announcements came as a shock to the Notre Dame community. Coccia said, and both student government administration responded with increased programming concerning sexual assault.

“I think what we realized with the emails and the conversation that happened at the beginning of the year was that we can have a greater urgency in addressing this issue,” he said, “and, in fact, if we're actually going to address it to a point where we start to change attitudes and culture, it’s got to come from students.”

Coccia said after students received the third sexual assault email of the semester, student government initiated prayer services at the Grotto following every campuswide email. He said this decision formalized an idea developed in Campuses Life Class.

"With the prayer services, I think we view them in two different ways," he said. “For one, it's a moment of healing for people who need it, and I think it does show that there are many in the community who are healing and want healing.

“At the same time, it’s also an action that shows immense solidarity, and for the people who show up, it says that there are a lot of people who want to have this conversation and who want to make things change.”

"But it certainly is a prayer service, and it certainly is a time of reflection on the issue. The three that we've had have been really beautiful, well-attended, and the fact that students are the ones running the prayer services and the ones preparing the reflections and the call to actions is all the more powerful.”

Coccia said Keenan Hall recre-

tor Noel Terranova and Fr. Peter McCormick are working to finalize the format of the prayer services for future administrations.

Notre Dame student body vice president Nancy Joyce said conversations in Senate regarding sexual assault have raised awareness of the issue on campus and have helped student government to implement other initiatives.

“Senate has been a really interesting means of talking about [sexual assault] because one, it's a lot of younger students, a lot of un-derclassmen, and also it’s a group of 50 people that come from a lot of different places and a lot of differ-ent perspectives,” Joyce said.

“I have spoken to some of them who have said that they have had conversations with their friends. At the end of the day, to me at least, as the chair of Senate, that's what I want to have happened. I want people to see this as enough of an issue that they are willing to talk to their friends about it, and if they talk to three friends about it and 50 people do that, well, there you go, that’s 150 people.”

Senate played a role in amending the text of the campuswide emails sent by Notre Dame Security Police (NDSP) to say “sexual battery” instead of “forcible fondling” and to be more respectful to victims of sexual assault, Joyce said.

“In thinking about ‘forcible fondling’ versus ‘sexual battery’ ... even though ‘forcible fondling’ is a legal term, that is just something that people associate with some-thing humorous for some reason or another,” she said. “The other piece of it is that the emails are not personal enough which I think is something that’s inherent a little bit in an email communication to the whole student body. It’s going to be somewhat im-personal, but I think it’s something that’s gotten better. The last part of it was that the wording at the end of the email was sort of sug-gective of the victim or survivor being somewhat responsible.”

Junior Monica Dargele, student government’s director of gender issues, worked with NDSP and with Title IX coordinator Dr. Bill Stackman to institute the changes, Joyce said.

Another result of conversa-tions in Senate was a student-only discussion about sexual assault, which took place Nov. 20, Joyce said. She said the meeting helped to organize students interested in promoting sexual-assault pre-vention in preparation for student government's "One is Too Many" door-to-door pledge campaign, set to begin in January.

"The motivation behind [the student-only discussion] was a couple things: one, to get people in a room who don’t typically talk about [sexual assault] or who have a lot of sway in their dorms and might be able to add to the conversation but don’t normally have those kinds of conversations, and then also to begin building our group of people who are going to help us with the campaign," Joyce said.

Coccia said of the 70 attendants that night, 40 signed up to lead door-to-door discussions for the "One is Too Many" campaign, while all 70 agreed to volunteer in some other way.

"We were really excited because I think the conversation there was very genuine," he said. "I think people brought up the types of concerns and reflections that we imagined would also come up in these one-on-one conversations for the pledge campaign, and so I think it was a good preview for us, in terms of gauging what that conversation looks like.”

For the Saint Mary’s Student Government Association (SGA), sexual assault prevention programming began before school even started, student body presi-dent Kat Sullivan said. All leaders within SGA received green-dot training, a national certification program for preventing sexual vi-lence, she said.

This year, green-dot train-ing was expanded to athletes as well, student body vice president Maddy Martin said. Members of the College’s basketball and volley-ball teams received the training in order to act as better bystanders in situations where there is a risk of sexual assault, she said.

Martin said this year’s adminis-tration wanted to incorporate similar training into first-year orientation.

"Student government wasn’t re-ally present in regards to Welcome Week, so we wanted to make sure that we, as leaders, were seen as soon as our first years came on campus,” she said. “So we wanted to, again, be able to promote stuff that they may face, coming in as first years. And we thought that this was a great way to implement our leadership and help them out, so they could come to us.”

During Welcome Week, student government led Know the Facts presentations about alcohol, sexual assault, depression and anxiety, Sullivan said.

"I feel like being a freshman in college, you’re 18, you’re finally considered an adult, so it’s impor-tant for us to have that open and honest discussion about these sorts of issues,” she said. “We’re not here to baby you. You’re taking con-trol of your own life.”

Sullivan said she thinks stu-dent government should inform students of the resources that are already available on campus for dealing with sexual assault.

“We realized that it’s really im-portant for us to emphasize the re-sources that are already available,” she said. “We don’t want to be re-petitive with what the students al-ready have, and so we really want to piggy back on [the] Beales Against Violence Office” and make sure that we’re helping advertise and promote their events, because we are such a presence on campus.

“I think that [sexual assault] is a major social issue in general, and, especially coming from a women’s college, it’s important that we are familiar with this issue and how to address it.”

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ND STUDENT UNION BOARD

By MICHAEL YU  The Observer

The annual Fall Mall sale orga-nized by SUB also stood out, with more sales this year than ever before, Keelin said.

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STUDENT GOVERNMENT ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

Students respond to sexual assault

MICHAEL YU  The Observer

Campus minister Fr. Peter McCormick spoke to students gathered at the Grotto to pray for victims of sexual assault on campus on Sept. 22. Student government holds prayer services after every new email report.
Leaders reimagine diversity, inclusion

By NICOLE MICHELS
Assistant Managing Editor

Student body leaders at Notre Dame and Saint Mary's targeted issues of racial and cultural inclusion this year by developing programing, fostering community building and advocating for institutional changes.

Notre Dame student body president Alex Coccia said he believes the council's role is to make members of their community more welcome on campus. That argument could not be more true, he said.

"I know [people] sometimes think of diversity as being just racial and ethnic, but for us, we took it a step further," Coccia said. "We expanded it to economic diversity, religious diversity, gender identity — any part of your identity that you feel makes you, you, we want to make sure that is talked about.

"Because the communities in our clubs are minorities in number, it makes it even more difficult to talk about them," he said.

Cardenas said she and Macfarlane use an innovative definition of diversity to orient the work of SDB. "I know [people] sometimes think of diversity as being just racial and ethnic, but for us, we took it a step further," Cardenas said. "We expanded it to economic diversity, religious diversity, gender identity — any part of your identity that you feel makes you, you, we want to make sure that is talked about." Macfarlane said.

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Macfarlane said.

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SMC COUNCIL OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Group designs programming to enrich College

By REBECCA O'NEIL
News Writer

Student Government Association’s Council of Committee Chairs (CCG) sought to improve the current programming offered to the student body this semester. CCG director Kelly Gutrich said.

"Our technology chairs have really helped us to be able to collabo rate across committees." Sophomore Gloria Zeiger represents the Sustainability Committee, while juniors Katie Stare and Rachel Weit serve the Food Council Committee. Gutrich said the teams were "meeting up to plan and execute this year’s Food Week, which featured exceptional meals at the dining halls." The council also meets with the director of the dining hall [Barry Batamuliza, the Technology, SGA and the student

"We brainstorm together, and sometimes issues from Senate are then brought to our specific chairs to look into more," Gutrich said. "We meet together, which really helps us to be able to col laborate across committees." Sophomore Gloria Zeiger represents the Sustainability Committee, while juniors Katie Stare and Rachel Weit serve the Food Council Committee. Gutrich said the teams were “meeting up to plan and execute this year’s Food Week, which featured exceptional food at the dining halls.”

"One of the most popular events was the ‘Share Your Story’ event where a group of five students from a variety of years shared their own struggles and triumphs while dealing with mental illness," Gutrich said. "This really showed how prevalent this issue is on campus but allowed students to see the Human Community in support of those struggling." Lauren Osmaniski and Aneth Batalumala, the Technology Committee’s co-chairs, main tained communication between the Office of Information Technology, SGA and the student body.

"Our technology chairs have been working with [junior] Anna Ulliman, who interned with Google this summer, to promote technology on campus by hosting ‘Google talks,’" Gutrich said. "Gutrich said the Council will be especially busy planning campus-wide events next semester.

"This summer will be the 50th year of the death of Sister Madeline and we will host the Heritage Week a really special aspect this year," Gutrich said. "Also, Love Your Body week is always an extremely popular event on cam pus. Various workout classes, discussion panels and alumnus speakers will be a part of the week this year."
A challenge: speak for all voices

PrismND establishes bylaws, unites allies

By MARISA IATI
Assistant Managing Editor

Although student body president Alex Coccia does not identify LGBTQ concerns as a priority of his administration, he said student government administrators are working on the implementation of the University’s “Beloved Friends and Allies” pastoral plan.

Specifically, Coccia said he and student body vice president Nancy Joyce noted on the selection panel for the assistant director who would address LGBTQ student concerns. He said he also named a student representative to the advisory committee on LGBTQ issues to Vice President for Student Affairs Erin Hoffmann Hardin.

“One of our recommendations in the (Oct. 17) Board of Trustees report was that the (administrative) council meet regularly … that it gets off to a good start,” Coccia said. “The purpose is essentially to gauge campus climate on LGBTQ inclusion and help make recommendations to [Hoffmann Hardin] as we move forward on this issue.”

In his report to the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees, Coccia’s administration recommended the advisory committee on LGBTQ concerns meet for the first time no later than Thanksgiving break and gather four times in the spring 2014 semester. The administration also suggested that Student Affairs “engage in action-oriented conversation regarding transgender students in the University housing system.”

In his May 1 State of the Student Union address, Coccia said his administration backed the LGBTQ student organization PrismND, and reiterated his administration’s support in an interview with The Observer.

“We plan to fully support the implementation of the new LGBTQ student organization and ally student organization as it is incorporated into the student unions … and we look forward to the honor of co-sponsoring one of their initial events,” Coccia said in the address.

This group now can assume the role played by the former LGBTQ student group, which operated without official University approval.

“Students had a huge victory a year ago, which was the recognition of the LGBTQ student group,” Coccia said. “Many of the efforts that I think we were necessary (before) … can now be facilitated by PrismND.”

The founding members of PrismND began to develop the group’s bylaws last semester, Coccia said.

“They started to formalize it a bit more, making the language consonant with what organization languages are and what organization bylaws look like, which includes components of funding and membership and meeting logistics,” he said. “Then it was back-and-forth conversation to ensure that the bylaws were solid and reflective of what the purpose of the organization was.”

Sophomore Connor Hayes, co-president of PrismND, said the club finalized its bylaws in early October, with the exception of one part that was solidified earlier this week.

Co-president Bryan Ricketts said PrismND’s first major event was a celebration of National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11. The group set up “closet” structures outside DeBartolo Hall and the LaFortune Student Center and encouraged students to “come out” as anything — a member of the LGBTQ community, a fan of country music, a peace studies major or something else.

Ricketts, a sophomore, said PrismND also sponsored a National Coming Out Day lunch withPassaggio East Hall. He said two speakers at the lunch discussed the concept of coming out both from an academic perspective and on a personal level.

PrismND’s other main event this semester was StAnD Against Hate Week from Nov. 4 through 8, Hayes said. The week, which the Gender Relations Center and Multicultural Student Programs and Services co-sponsored, featured a “What It Means to Be an Ally” dinner, two forums, and a candlelight prayer service.

Hayes said between 20 and 30 people attended the group’s organized events every other week. He said next semester PrismND will hold separate meetings in which people can discuss issues they face.

The organizational meetings do not serve this function because they are mainly meant as time for planning events, Ricketts said.

“They’re not necessarily a space where community can grow,” he said. “We want to have a space where people can just come and talk about issues on campus, issues they’re having, issues they see in the world outside of the Notre Dame bubble.”

PrismND aims to be a welcoming space for all parts of the LGBTQ and ally communities on campus, Hayes said.

“We want to make sure that [the group] doesn’t develop some sort of reputation of being associated with certain things, associated with certain parts of the University. Someone could be like, ‘If I’m part of the University, and I identify as gay, but I’m kind of conservative, and I don’t think I feel at home there.’”

“That kind of thing — making sure that it is as inclusive as possible … I think that’s kind of a guiding principle to a lot of things that we do.”

Hayes said now that PrismND’s working dynamics are established, the group aims to host more programming next semester.

LGBTQ concerns remain a “very personal priority” for Coccia, he said.

“We’ve really come to a new step in campus culture,” Coccia said. “The way I like to frame it … is two-and-a-half years ago, the question was, ‘Are you an ally?’ … The question now is, ‘Why wouldn’t you be an ally?’”

“Student government’s role in this respect, I think, is continually providing a support for that.”

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ND SENATE

Group focuses on sexual assault, inclusion

By MARGARET HYNDS
News Writer

The Saint Mary’s Student Senate completed its third semester of meetings with high hopes for the spring. SGA vice president Maddy Martin said she is really proud of the new structure.

“I’m really proud of the way they’ve handled these issues,” Joyce said. “They’ve done a good job of contributing different view-points and bringing different per-spectives to the table.”

To address sexual assault on campus, Senate passed a resolution in mid-September in support of NDSP’s decision to change the wording of emails sent to the student body following sexual assault reports. Most noticeably, the term “sexual battery” replaced “forcible fondling.”

Although the official decision was made by NDSP, at the time, student body president Alex Coccia said, “[the resolution] shows our support of the fact that they asked for our input.”

In its last meeting before Thanksgiving, the group passed a resolution to support recom-mendations regarding inclusion on campus issued by the Diversity Council. A similar resolution had failed to pass a week earlier after a series of heated debates leading up to the vote.

“I think [those two] resolutions are the biggest ones to come out of Senate, not just because of what the resolutions said, but because of the discussions we had,” Joyce said. “More than anything, I was really pleased with the fact that it seemed to me that senators were going back to their dorms and talk-ing with [their constituents].”

Joyce said senate acts as a “great soundingboard” for ideas to help de-termine how the student body might react to different things.

“I hope they view their role as one that comes with a lot of im-portance and weight because I take their opinions very seriously,” she said. “I hope they view their role as one that has a lot of influ-ence over what happens in student government.”

In general, I think that the sena-tors can go underappreciated, so I’d like to say to anyone reading this article that they should go back to their dorms and thank them.”

Joyce said for the rest of the aca-demic year, the group will deal with procedural issues and prob-ably continue its conversations about diversity and sexual assault on campus.

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SMC SENATE

Assembly adopts new structure

By KELLY KONYA
Associate Saint Mary’s E-Editor

The Saint Mary’s Student Senate completed its third semester of meetings with high hopes for the spring. SGA vice president Maddy Martin said she is really proud of the new structure.

“I’m really proud of the new structure we formatted this year, because we added some new positions and also evened out the amount of senators per grade,” she said. 

Martin said permanent attendees included rep-representatives of each “big board” on campus, including the presidents of Student Diversity Board, Residence Hall Association and Student Activities Board. Senators elected from each class, of-ficers of SGA and ordinary students also participated.

“That encouraged a town-hall setting,” Martin said. “Essentially, we are covering every corner of campus, and this is the only sort of collective meeting that accomplishes that.”

Senate added a new amendment to the SGA constitution, establishing guidelines for the group’s parliamentary order, Martin said.

“We are still in the midst of revising our constitution right now, because we real-ized many things in it that we are not using or we have something new that needs to be incorporated,” she said. “We hope the modified guidelines will encourage efficiency within the Senate and uphold the traditions set in the place by previous SGA officers.”

“Each board has been working to go through their part of the constitution, and so our final goal is to have the constitution revised and fi-nalized by April’s turnover.”

This semester, senate also discussed the fiscal bud-get for the remainder of the school year, vice president of finance Emily Murphy said.

Rachel Sinchak, a junior senator, said this financial evaluation was especial-ly important for all of the big-board and class-board members.

“It’s hard because the SGA budget isn’t able to allocate huge funds to every board, but Emily [Murphy] and the other officers really try their best to share the finances equally across the groups,” she said. “The biggest part of the senate is to be as ben-e ficial to as many student groups as possible while also being cost-effective, and I think most of the deci-sions reached this year in the meetings reflected that principle.”

Another issue senate con-sidered was the decision to host a dance with the Naval Academy following the Notre Dame-Navy football game Nov. 2. Though the dance was eventually approved, senators held an entire meet-ing addressing whether or not the event would be ad- vantageous for SGA’s overall budget. Martin said.

“I thought it was great for our senators to be able to see from start to finish how this sort of process works,” Martin said. “Our senators were surprised with how much involvement they had in decisions like this, as they were the ultimate deciding factor in events and their opinions truly mattered.”

Looking ahead to the spring, Martin said the sena-tors have been encouraged to bring to the group ideas that may not have been ad-dressed already.

“We hope to continue to answer all unanswered questions on campus, like issues with technology or parking and so on,” Martin said. “I think the senate is most constructive because the senators who are per-tinent to their respective classes come and raise ques-tions that have been floating around campus.

“This helps with our goal of transparency, as the girls can provide the answers to the rest of the student body after we have decided what will benefit the entire campus.”

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CAMPUS LIFE COUNCIL

Board analyzes community, academic needs

By CATHERINE OWERS
News Writer

Alex Coccia, student body presi-dent and chair of the Campus Life Council (CLC) said the organiza-tion brings together students and faculty for a wide range of different perspectives on campus.

“When we come together to dis-cuss issues related to student life, I think it’s very important to have those varied perspectives,” he said.

This year, the council is or-ganized into three task forces, Coccia said, in an effort to address comprehensive issues. The three groups focus on safety and health, community building and holistic student development, and they will draft reports of their findings next semester.

Coccia said the third task force focuses on students’ overall growth and improvement especially out-side the classroom.

“This semester, the safety and health group initiated the prayer services following email alerts of sexual assault, Coccia said.

“Now that’s a small action step,” he said. “At the same time, we’re talking about sexual assault and alcohol culture on campus. One of the things we’ll be focusing on next semester is doing focus groups with students to really get a sense of what people look for in parties and in building healthy relation-ships, whether people understand the signs of alcohol poisoning, and what the potential barriers are to helping someone who is intoxica-ted if they need help.”

The community building task force is examining program-ming, Coccia said, and examining “where people find their primary community.”

“They’re going to look at dorms that have higher rates of rector turn-over, and they’re going to look at the effect that has had on dorms, in order to help make recommenda-tions on rectors in the coming year,” he said. “They’ve also been looking at Mass attendance information to see how we can better serve people in that area, and with consistent presiders. Also, they’re working with Diversity Council and the recommendations they’ve made recently.”

The third task force has exam-ined the practices of peer institutions in academic areas, Coccia said.

“One of the things they’re look-ing at right now is office hours, what best practices for office hours are and ensuring students have a mentoring relationship with their faculty,” he said. “They’ve also been looking at class timing, to see if there are ways we can ensure that students aren’t getting out of labs at crazy hour of the night, so people can actually have time to work on their own and have extracurricular engagement, as well.”

The CLC works to “benchmark” the practices of peer institutions, Coccia said, as well as soliciting student feedback, in the process of making recommendations.

“It’s a very deliberate procedure, but it’s also good because it allows us to the time to have ongoing dis-cussions, rather than just jump-ing in and saying ‘this is what I think we should do,’” he said. “We have the opportunity and the per-spective to really challenge each other, exchange ideas and make sure we’re going to make proper recommendations.”

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GRADE: B

CLC’s primarily an advisory body, but it does not seem like they achieved many concrete goals this semester.

GRADE: A-

SMC senate has succeeded in finding a structure that makes it effective and incorporates the voices of various boards on campus. The group has also formalized this organization for future administrations.
The Department of University Affairs met with administrators to discuss potential improvements to “DARTing” and its distribution. It continued its Last Lecture series, introduced a First Lectures series and teamed up with several University offices to bring TEDxUND to campus in January. It also created a study-space map, available on InsideND and mobileUND. The department has many ambitious initiatives planned but has much to do in order to accomplish all of its goals by the end of the term.

The Department of Social Concerns sponsored a day of service, sports and networking in Chicago with the varsity lacrosse team called Playing for Peace and also implemented the Serve ND website to aggregate all the on-campus service groups. In addition, the department orchestrated a prayer service and discussion in response to the crisis in Syria. They planned spring events including a benefit dinner for Syria, a local food campaign, another Playing for Peace event and a Social Action Network to facilitate collaboration among service groups at Notre Dame. These events and the ones in progress earned the department an A-.

The Department of Academic Affairs increased the hours of access to DeBartolo Hall and worked with NDSP to repair emergency phones outside dorms. It partnered with Notre Dame Food Services to promote food sustainability. The department hopes to establish an easy and affordable transportation system for off-campus students and to implement a bike rental program. To improve from its B-ranking, the department will have to see more tangible results and must make significant progress.

The Department of Community Relations coordinated the Northeast Neighborhood Welcome Back Picnic, uniting students and local residents to celebrate the beginning of the school year. The community summit facilitated goal sharing between local leaders and the University administration. The department also sponsored a bus tour to expose new students to entertainment spots and South Bend’s history. They created committees of students from all higher education institutions in South Bend, connecting them with community leaders to learn about internship and entertainment opportunities. Through this, they expanded students’ lives beyond campus and into South Bend, earning them the A.

The Department of Residential Life developed the first annual Irish State of Mind Week to raise awareness about mental health on campus, working with SMC and Holy Cross College. In addition, they are developing a formal proposal for open dining hall hours, a Grab and Go satellite and a swipes plan. Hopefully, they will fulfill their pledge to improve RecSports and student housing next semester. The department deserves an A-for completing a number of very important issues affecting student life, and making progress on even more.

The Department of Academic Affairs worked with NDSP to revise its sexual-assault alert emails — specifically, to change “forcible fondling” to “sexual battery” and to make the language more clearly supportive of victims. The department organized prayer services to follow alert emails and partnered with the Gender Relations Center to promote Sexual Violence Awareness Month. It will team up with PrismND to coordinate transgender awareness events in the spring and will continue to investigate the effects of updated dorm alarm policies.

The Department of Social Concerns successfully organized a macro-summit this semester and facilitated a Dorm Tech Liaison initiative to help students with technical difficulties in their dorms. However, they have a low grade because they failed to successfully improve policies on campus. They do have potentially significant projects in progress, such as upgrading the DART and printing systems, creating an updated mobile app and purchasing a new scanner for the Coleman-Morse Center. Each of these improvements would drastically enhance student life, but the department needs to move more headway.

The Department of Gender Issues worked with NDSP to revise its sexual-assault alert emails — specifically, to change “forcible fondling” to “sexual battery” and to make the language more clearly supportive of victims. The department organized prayer services to follow alert emails and partnered with the Gender Relations Center to promote Sexual Violence Awareness Month. It will team up with PrismND to coordinate transgender awareness events in the spring and will continue to investigate the effects of updated dorm alarm policies.

The Department of Internal Affairs successfully addressed technical problems regarding language in the Constitution but has not successfully completed initiatives that affect the wider student body. In fact, their ongoing projects also are fairly trivial — most address clarifications regarding the Senate or the Constitution. They competently take on behind-the-scenes work and small tasks, but they need to evaluate their work to work toward a larger-scale initiative that can impact student life or student government as a whole. Because of this, the department earned a B.

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